

BIG MAN AND PATRONAGE SYSTEM: ITS ROLE IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Introduction

Research in public administration has advanced with the prescription of characteristics based on various models and paradigms. The generally accepted paradigms in public administration, such as traditional public administration (TPA) and new public management (NPM), are helpful in studying the content and dynamics of policy change and also in determining the dynamics of the field of public administration's identity and the manner in which governments are shaped and function (Capano, 2003; Henry, 1975; Lovrich, 1985). The experiences of some countries show that each paradigm has been the dominant movement during a particular period, for example, the TPA during towards the end of the 19th and large part of the 20th centuries, and the NPM in the last two to three decades (Schedler *et al.*, 2004). These experiences, however, are mostly relevant to developed countries. For developing countries, the experience is slightly different. Take for instance, a developing country such as Papua New Guinea (PNG), which is the main focus of this article. PNG only gained its independence from Australia in 1975, and as we shall observe in this paper, the paradigmatic changes to the public administration system has had to be made within a span of 40 to 50 years. The implications of such dramatic changes are that, firstly, it does not give the developing countries sufficient time to try and test the different models of public administration. Secondly, there is no space provided within these new paradigms to incorporate more traditional and indigenous forms of public administration. In fact, these traditional forms of public administration, such as the patronage system, are either ignored as non-existent or viewed negatively requiring change. Nevertheless, aspects of patronage system with strong historical and traditional influences are still prevalent and influence the way the public administration operates in many developing countries (Ugyel, 2014).

This article argues how the patronage system continues to play a prominent role in determining the characteristics of the public administration system in developing countries. It explains that the patronage system stems from the underlying social and cultural heritage of a country. It does this by examining the indigenous culture of "big man" of PNG and the manner it continues to shape PNG's public administration. PNG, is an independent country located in the Pacific Islands with a population of 7.3 million people (National Statistical Office, 2011). The country consists of 22 provinces spread over 600 islands and its population speak close to 800 different languages. Endowed with rich natural resources, such as copper and natural gas, PNG is classified as a lower middle income country by the World Bank with a GDP per capita income of US\$2,268 in 2014. PNG, has also been classified by Transparency International, in its latest report, as one of the most corrupt countries ranked 139 out of 168 (Transparency International, 2015).

Despite its rich resources, the main reasons for its poor development and corruption is attributed to the pervasive culture that is strongly embedded in society (Fukuyama, 2007; McLeod 2008; Payani, 2000; Pieper 2004; Sundeen, 1982). Attempts have been made in PNG to incorporate new policies and mechanisms to overcome some of the challenges that it faces. However, these policies have largely failed as they overlooked the clashes and the ambivalence created between the modern and traditional elements in PNG (Abraham and Miller, 2011; Hardman, 1986; Payani, 2000). Based on the understanding of PNG's indigenous tradition of big man, this article seeks to provide an insight into how the

patronage system can, and should, co-exist within a mix of ideal types in public administration. The article seeks to contribute towards understanding what aspects of PNG's culture, particularly those that are linked to the patronage system, continue to pervade from the perspective of public administration.

Patronage System within the Ideal Types of Public Administration

To explain the paradigms in public administration, this article draws upon work done by Stoker (2006) where he examines the public value management paradigm that he advocates as the post-NPM paradigm in contrast with the TPA and NPM. According to Stoker the key puzzles in public administration are: how is efficiency achieved; how is accountability maintained; and how are issues of equity addressed? Each of the paradigms answer the three questions by defining 'what is at stake and how it is going to be achieved in different ways' (Stoker, 2006: 50). For instance, under TPA, efficiency is achieved by systematically dividing tasks and taking action by getting staff to follow procedures, rules and systems correctly. Accountability is to elected political leaders who steer and exercise oversight, and equity is achieved by meting out uniformity in services, that is, by treating all similar cases in the same way. For NPM, efficiency is achieved by setting tough performance tasks that the organisation is encouraged to achieve. Managers are held accountable for achievement of targets set by politicians under NPM and equity issues are addressed by offering a framework of responsiveness to users and setting targets to achieve fair access to services. Under public value management, which is the emerging paradigm that Stoker discusses, efficiency is achieved by checking on a continuous basis that an activity fits the purpose for which it was initially set out. In terms of accountability, it is addressed by negotiating goal setting and oversight, and equity issues are addressed by developing individual capacity so that rights and responsibilities are realised. It must be noted, however, while Stoker and others (such as: Alford and O'Flynn, 2008; Moore, 1995) have advocated public value management as the post-NPM paradigm there are numerous other "paradigms" and models vying for that status. Some prominent contenders are: governance-related models, for example, responsive new governance and public administration (Bourgon, 2009), governance (Rhodes, 1996; UN, 2005), new public governance (Osborne, 2006), digital-era governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006), and joining up government agencies such as whole-of-government or joined-up government (Christensen and Laegreid, 2007; Pollitt, 2003). It is also important to note that the extant debate on paradigms in the field of public administration is mostly based on the Western world. There is an increasing number of researchers who argue that the Eastern world has its own set of paradigms (for example: see Drechsler, 2013).

Although it has never been classified as a paradigm, the patronage system is an important component of administrative history and forms the basis for the emergence of the TPA as a paradigm. Sorauf (1959: 28) defines the patronage as 'an incentive system', a political currency with which to purchase political activity and political responses. The patronage system can be characterized by the notion of 'spoils system'. It is basically a system that is based on the concept where 'it is axiomatic that "to the winners go the spoils"' (Gardner, 1987: 171). Prior to the TPA, it was considered as one of 'the most effective devices through which executive influence could be exerted' (Kaufman, 1956: 1068). The spoils system was prevalent during the times of kings and emperors who distributed power and position to loyal supporters and also in the USA where the president appoints political supporters in the government. The spoils system benefits both the benefactor and the beneficiary. It can be assumed that the patronage system prevailed in many nations from the early periods of public administration's history right until around the time when modern public administration

systems in the 17th and 18th centuries were introduced in Western countries. The patronage system is still prevalent in a number of public administrations of developing countries (Grindle, 2012). In addition to the TPA, NPM and emerging models, the patronage system has also been included as an ideal type of public administration. To that end, similarities and differences between these ideal types are outlined and summarised in Table 1. In the literature pertaining to public administration, there are references to eight characteristics that permeate its practice: characterisation, citizen-state relationship, accountability of senior officials, dominant focus or guiding principles, key attributes, preferred system of delivery, performance objectives and role of public participation.

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With reference to Table 1, this section describes some of the main characteristics of the patronages system. It can be characterised by the notion of a ‘spoils system’. It is a system based on the concept where ‘it is axiomatic that “to the winners go the spoils”’ (Gardner, 1987: 171). The citizen-state relationship in the patronage system is that of a servant-master relation where citizens are required to provide services to the state. The public administration is based on relationships between the patron and the client, which range from those types of relationships that serve the personal interests of the patron to those where the relationships serve mutual interests of the patron as well as the clients. Based on the type of relationships between the patron and client, offices and posts are established on a needs-basis and to best serve personal interests. The guiding principle of the patronage system is loyalty. The symbiotic and personal relationships of beneficiary-benefactor form the key attributes of the patronage system. For the beneficiaries it means they get employed, and for the benefactors, appointing people loyal to them means they achieve their political aims. The main indicator of performance is longevity in a particular position, whether it is the leader or the official. For the patron, the goals are to consolidate power and increase or maintain their scope of influence; for the client, the goal is to serve loyally towards fulfilling the goals of the patron (Bearfield, 2009). There are no other particular standards of measuring performance in place, and all channels of accountability directly lead to a leader or one dominant political party. Rules, if at all present, are also often arbitrary, which could be unjust, particularly to those who are unable to prove their loyalty or unwilling to indulge in personal political games. Financial rewards and other incentives are based on the spoils system and are entirely dependent on the whims of leaders. Under a patronage system the accountability of senior officials is to the leader or sovereign of the day. The criteria and mechanism to establish accountability depends entirely on the leader or sovereign. The patronage system takes a top-down approach in the delivery of services through duress. Decisions are made solely by an individual or by a small group of people. It is pivotal that the leader maintains and improves communication systems to facilitate transmission of orders and ensure the flow back of resources and information (Gladden, 1972). The decisions made, even if they do appear benevolent, often to serve or further personal interests. The citizens do not have a voice in making or altering decisions, unless they choose to initiate a revolution against the leader.

Big Man in PNG

PNG is a diverse country with an amalgamation of numerous tribes divided by language, custom and tradition. Each tribe in PNG are organized based on kinship which prescribes how people living together interacts with one another (Prideaux, 2006). It was anticipated in the 1960s and 1970s that PNG, being a part of the global economy, would lead to disintegration of indigenous social structures with capitalist mode of production displacing

the non-capitalist modes (Curry, 2003). The emergence of ‘cargo cults’, a system of belief that the arrival of ancestral spirits in ships bringing cargoes of food and other goods, were perceived to be a reflection of this social transformation (Curry, 2003: 407). Traditional social structures, however, did not disintegrate, and have continued to play an integral part in society and governance in PNG. Generally, differences between the cultures of the Pacific Islands countries and Western cultures is that the latter subsumes individual interests within institutionalized social structures: whereas, the former, on the other hand, include both ‘differentiating and collectivizing interests’ and is based on personal networks of kin and exchange partners (Lederman, 2000: 1163). This section deliberates on the different culture of big man in PNG and examines some of its characteristics, and its relevance to the patronage system. It will also briefly discuss the *wantok* system, a concept which on its own will require a separate discussion beyond the scope of this paper. Thus only aspects of the *wantok* system that is related to the patronage system is discussed in this article.

The term “big man”, according to Lederman (2000: 1162), is the ‘Anglicization of a descriptive phrase *bikpela man*—meaning “prominent man” ... [and a term] to refer to male leaders whose political influence is achieved by means of public oratory, informal persuasion, and the skillful conduct of both private and public wealth exchange’. It refers to achieved leadership and stands for a type of polity that is associated closely with the ethnography of Melanesia (Lederman, 2000). An important point to be noted in the definition is the distinction between big men of Melanesia from the chiefs of Polynesia. Melanesia includes countries in the Pacific Islands such as Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu, and Polynesia includes countries in the Pacific Islands such as Samoa and Tonga. Sahlins (1963: 287) differentiated the tribal plan in Melanesia as segmental from the pyramidal political geometry of Polynesia. In other words, the Polynesian chief is based on a highly stratified hereditary hierarchy whereas the Melanesian big man is based on a bottom up egalitarian system (Lawson 2010). Additionally, in Melanesia the political organization is based upon patrilineal descent groups and consists of many autonomous kinship-residential groups based in a small village or a local cluster of hamlets. There has been some criticism in the dichotomization of Melanesian big men and Polynesian chiefs as countries have exhibited traits of both cultures. The areas of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia are not clear cut, and cultural characteristics more commonly associated with Polynesia may be found in parts of Melanesia (McLeod 2008). However, as McLeod (2008) justifies, if they are applied with some qualification these distinctions help in the understanding of basic variations in leadership patterns throughout the Pacific, which are clearly manifest in contemporary institutions. Another point to note with the definition of big man is that women are excluded. A majority of traditional societies of PNG commonly practice the patrilineal system where men are the legitimate head of the decision making process (Prideaux, 2006). There are pockets of PNG society, however, confined to the coastal provinces, that follow a matrilineal system where women take lead role in decision making, and owns land and property.

The fundamental difference between the Melanesian big man from the Polynesian chief is that it is not an inherited position or with formal councils. Sahlins (1963: 289) describes big man as those with ‘personal power’, who have come to office and are not succeeded or installed into existing positions of leadership. The big man status is an outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common people and attracts a loyal group of followers. A big man must earn and prove himself in his tribe or community to earn the title. These communities reflect an egalitarian society where men become big man by successfully orienting their clansmen to collective ends (Lederman, 2000). They rely on their personal relationships and access to resources to establish loyalty and obligation in their communities.

Depending on a small core of followers, initially family members, big man aspirants seek to extend their influence and build alliances with local and regional networks. Maintaining the status of a big man takes consistent effort, reinforcing and sustaining personal loyalty from the community. The big man, who has accumulated wealth, also experiences pressure to release wealth into the system of exchange to remain respected within their communities (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997). The traditional aspect of gift-exchange in Melanesian societies is dominant principle that affects a range of social, economic and political institutions, and the failure to engage in exchange undermines the identity and unity of the kinship group (Abraham and Miller, 2011; Curry, 2003). The big man often has to invest in larger social good of their communities by paying bride-prices and investing in other social causes, such as education of others' children. Just as easy it is to become a big man, the opposite is also true. Fluctuating loyalty from the community towards the big man and death of a big man are some of the common ways that can depose a big man. Therefore, Sahlins (1963: 293) contends that the big man political system is 'unstable over short terms' with a flux of rising and falling leaders and contracting factions. Another key cultural practice impacts the performance of indigenous big man is the 'infamous' *wantok* system, which has seeped into politics and public service (McLeod, 2008: 8). *Wantoks*, a term which could mean different things to different people depending on the context and circumstances, is a term generally used to express 'patterns of relationships and networks that link people in families and regional localities and it is also a reference to provincial, national and sub-regional identities' (Nanau, 2011: 32). *Wantoks* play an important social support function and highlights the ongoing importance of the role of kin and the notion of reciprocity (McLeod, 2008). People are expected to meet their social obligations, failing which they can face social sanctions ranging from withdrawal of future support to social ostracism.

In today's PNG the concept of big man is still relevant. But there are arguments that various factors are contributing to its diminishing role. Factors such as the intrusion of capitalism, Western education, missionization, new forms of state and local government, and emergence of gender, generational and class difference have promoted the diversified the traditional big man leadership roles in PNG (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997). Furthermore, developmental trends such as out migration of rural areas of PNG have also posed challenges for big men in PNG to organize and control exchanges, remittances and marriages of migrants. Some of the new leaderships roles have taken the forms of village councilor, priests, parliamentarians and rascal gang leader. The rise of an educated and bureaucratic elite, exercising the power of the State and with desirable goods and services have reduced the roles of traditional big men (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997). Ketan (2013) also points to the manifestation of the traditional big man to modern day politicians. The similarities between the two are in their status achieved through competition excelling in their ceremonial exchange maintained and investing in social relations. The differences between the two, however, are that the traditional big men would ensure that everyone else received a fair share, for example, in the distribution of food, before he took his share, and this would be done in a transparent and accountable manner. The political modern counterpart, however, would take their share first before others. Nonetheless, cultures prevalent in the PNG, such as the big man system and *wantok* continue to find their way into society. For instance, Stewart and Strathern (1998; 132) point out to the example of 'big peasant' or 'kulaks' as successors in the capitalist mode to the 'big men' of the past. They argue that the Westminster system of democracy provides avenues for such leaders to enter into politics, and subsequently, democracy in PNG has not led to an emergence of strong policy-based political parties but have been diverted into patronage.

It is important to understand the inter-twining of traditional and modern forms of social structures. In many ways they go hand in hand. On the one hand, countries need to incorporate systemic changes that are necessary to keep pace with the global changes. On the other hand, these “new changes” also need to bear in mind the underlying indigenous social structures for their successful transition. To illustrate this point, Ketan (2013: 5) provides an example of ‘good governance’. PNG, a country infamous for its corruption, is often pressured by international institutions, such as the United Nations, to incorporate principles of good governance based on concepts such as transparency and accountability. However, Ketan argues that examples from Melanesia and the Pacific demonstrate the application of good governance principles in the conduct of leaders existed before the concept was made popular in the 1990s by the international institutions. In a traditional setting in PNG, to gain leadership status one must display leadership qualities, such as being a good spokesperson and must be capable of leading people (Prideaux, 2006). Before moving on to the next section, it must also be noted that while this section highlights aspects of PNG’s patronage system based on its indigenous social structures, it must not be perceived as a West/non-West bifurcation of the world. Such counter-hegemonic discourse, Lawson (2010: 1) warns, could produce ‘simplistic images of contemporary regional politics that mask a much more complex set of social, political and economic relations’.

Public Administration System of Papua New Guinea

Studies of PNG’s public administration divide its development into various categories and stages. One useful categorization is provided by Hardman (1986). Based on a study of PNG’s financial administration, which is applicable to public administration in PNG, Hardman categorized PNG’s public administration into four paradigms: colonial, independence, neo-colonial and indigenous. The colonial paradigm originated during the German and British settlement of PNG and crystallized under Australian control. The independence paradigm set to replace the high degree of metropolitan control and expatriate direction with an indigenous model reflecting development priorities, national aspirations and cultural values of the new independent country in 1975. Although the independence paradigm set the stage for new forms and institutions, the changes were more ‘illusionary than real’ (Hardman, 1986: 155). There was largely a continuation of the practices and standards of the preceding colonial paradigm, and it is identified as the neo-colonial paradigm. The indigenous paradigm, on which the independence paradigm is based, exists as a theoretical construct arisen from the failure of the public sector to produce institutions and practice suitable for the priorities of a young independent and developing country such as PNG. Another categorization of PNG’s public administration is provided by Pieper (2004). Based on interviews with senior public servants from PNG, Pieper distinguishes two periods of PNG’s public administration: pre-1980s and post-1980s. There was general consensus that the early 1980s marked a period of excellent public administration in PNG where: everyone shared a common agenda; there was robust and frequent debate; there was strong, centralized control of monetary and fiscal policy; senior public servants were generally better educated than politicians; teamwork was the name of the game; the public service was independent and professional; public servants were well trained, dedicated and closely in touch with basic service needs in provinces; and there was a dynamic team of young and committed expatriates. The post-1980s period, on the other hand, reflects a period of ‘poor administration’ (Pieper, 2004: 2). Some of the characteristics of this period are: there was a move away from traditional bureaucratic procedures; a cadre of political advisers was put in place; the lines between politics and administration began to blur; rise of self-interests; control of sectoral budgets; control of senior public service positions; decentralization policies not functioning as intended;

instability in tenure; independence and professionalism have been eroded; and lines of authority and discipline have collapsed.

A third, and perhaps the most insightful, perspective to PNG's public administration development post-independence is provided by Turner and Kavanamur (2009), and they present three distinct periods of public administration between the years 1975 to 2002. The first is identified as 1975–1984: tinkering with bureaucracy, the second is 1985–1994: the creeping crisis in public sector management, and the third is 1995–2001: the acute crisis of public sector management. The period 1975–1984 marked a period of reforms where the state was restructured through a devolutionary form of decentralization. The 1977 Organic Law on Provincial Government gave elected provincial assemblies responsibilities for a range of functions but the centre still retained some financial controls. Some of the other reforms during this period were the capacity building of local staff and restructuring. Towards the end of this period, in 1983, the increasing financial burden of maintaining the public service was a concern and sought to reduce the size of the public service through a downsizing initiative which was not successful. A major challenge during this period was also identified as the lack of capacity towards achieving the national plans and objectives. The period between 1985–1994 in PNG is described as the creeping crisis, where a succession of events transforms itself into an acute crisis. While there were numerous policies in place with considerable interests from donors, such as the World Bank, policy design and implementation were often poor without much political support. Some of the problems identified during this period were the large size of the public service, over-centralization with excessive procedures, no incentives for staff and an independent Public Service Commission (PSC) which ignored the government (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). To overcome these problems, the PSC was made an advisory body and it was replaced by the Department of Personnel Management. This new department gave the cabinet greater control over human resource management functions such as appointing heads of departments and agencies, and also many personnel responsibilities were delegated to departmental heads. Some of the other policies recommended were corporatization, privatization, downsizing and restructuring. However, these reforms were not effectively implemented (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). The third period is the acute crisis of public sector management between the years 1995–2001. This period recognizes the need for public sector reform by government, donors and public. It was during this period that the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments was passed by the Parliament in July 1995. Amongst other, some of its main tenets were to improve delivery of services to the rural areas, increase participation in government at community level and increase funding to local governments. The country, during this period, was also experiencing severe economic difficulties and sought assistance from the World Bank and IMF through the stabilization and structural adjustment program in 1994. As a pre-condition to avail funds, the PNG government had to promise a public sector wage freeze from April–December 1995, retrenchment for 7.5 percent of the public servants, improve personnel management and payroll controls, restructuring of finance and planning functions, privatization, and regrouping, consolidation and corporatization of agencies (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009).

Currently, PNG has three levels of government with local, provincial and national government. The public service in PNG is the larger employer in the formal sector and employs over 61,000 staff, which accounts for more than 40 percent of the total work force in the country and consumes over one-third of PNG's GDP (UN, 2004). This is a steady increase from approximately 50,000 public servants at independence and the 55,000 in 1981 (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). This section examines the current system of PNG's public

administration by describing its characteristics based on the ideal types outlined in Table 1. In terms of its main characteristics, PNG in the 1990s with the help of international institutions sought to inculcate components of the NPM paradigm (Pieper, 2004). Developing countries joining the band-wagon of the NPM-trend during this time was common (Manning, 2001; Schick, 1998). Typical NPM-related reforms included privatization and corporatization, and private sector concepts based on competition, such as employments based on contracts and output based performance. PNG's public administration also decreased the authority and functions of a centralized Public Service Commission, and the Department of Personnel Management has taken on some of its role. The individual departments and agencies also have a substantial authority in their own personnel functions. According to the National Public Service Human Resource Business Process Manual of 2014, departments in PNG's government are responsible for functions such as determining their staffing and personnel emoluments budget requirement, and recruiting their own staff. The main intention of providing individual departments greater authority of their personnel management is to build professionalism in their organization.

The adoption of aspects of the NPM-related reforms in PNG should make the accountability of senior officials to the customers. However, the current practice of accountability of senior officials is to the politicians. Numerous provisions in the Public Service Management Act of 2014, particularly in reporting and appointments of departmental heads, points to this aspect of accountability. According to the Act, department heads are the principal advisor to the minister and ensures the efficient and effective performance of the department in the delivery of services to the public. The department heads are also required to provide reports to the Department of Prime Minister and the National Executive Council. Additionally, the performance appraisals of departmental heads are made by the Prime Minister based on regulations and provisions recommended by the Department of Personnel Management and the Chief Secretary to the Government. Clearly, the dominant focus or the guiding principle that is driving the public administration of PNG is its emphasis on achieving results. Each departmental head, as specified in the Public Service Act of 2014, is required to prepare an annual report on the attainment of the planned objectives of the department for submission to the Department of Personnel Management or the National Executive Council. The focus of the performance objectives of outputs in PNG's public administration is also reflected in the Department of Personnel Management's official website (www.dpm.gov.pg) where it specifies that executives of the departments are responsible for the performance management component of an agency's contract which includes performance commitment agreements and consistent with the key result areas of the agency. At the individual level public servant's level, performance appraisals are carried out bi-annually. PNG government's National Public Service Human Resource Business Process Manual of 2014 specifies that the main objectives of the performance appraisal system are to: highlight skills deficiencies, determine potential for promotion, assess disciplinary action and reward good performance.

The vision for PNG's development is based on the private sector's accelerated growth. However, the reality in implementing the vision has been a challenge and the state continues to play a dominant role (ADB, 2015). With NPM reforms being initiated in PNG, one would assume that its citizens would be treated as customer and that they would have a role in public participation through platforms such as, customer satisfaction surveys. Political involvement in rural areas is limited and political parties do not have a significant rural base (Hauck, 2010). Given the minor role of private sector and with a large portions of the populace living in rural areas, the citizen-state relationship tends to be that of obedience rather than entitlement or empowerment, and the public participation is limited to voting in

elections. Having said that, there have been attempts at improving the delivery of services. Initiatives such as the Public Sector Workforce Development Program in 2006 sought to improve the performance of public administration and its ability to deliver basic services effectively to the citizens. Some of the more recent initiatives taken by the government that engages the private sector and other stakeholders are policies such as the National Public Private Partnership Policy of 2014 seek to work together with the private sector to improve quality, cost-effectiveness and timely provision of infrastructure and services. An important stakeholder that has played an important role in the provision of services, in the past and present, is the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society, particularly the church. Hauck (2010: 50) underscores the role of churches in PNG, pointing out that have had a 'long-term engagement with communities at the grassroots, as well as with country leadership' and that they have contributed significantly to social development, nurturing norms and values and building sustainable organisations. In a country where close to 96 percent of the population identify themselves as Christians of various dominations, the churches enjoy legitimacy and support from the population, and work together with the government to make an impact in areas of governance and public policy. Some of the policy outcomes of the churches are they provide about half of the country's health services, co-manage with the government approximately 40 percent of the primary and secondary education facilities, operate two of the country's six universities, train many of the country's teachers and health workers, and involve in peace and reconciliation activities.

Challenges in PNG's Public Administration

PNG's public administration is plagued with problems. From the inception of its independence, Payani (2000: 135) reports that the public service has 'failed to realize the purpose for which it was established' and has failed to execute government policies effectively and deliver goods and services. During the initial years after independence, some of the most common problems with PNG's public administration were related to: career opportunities, such as the lack of structured career system, absence of promotions and inadequate salary; inadequacies of management, where managers were perceived as indecisive and slow in responding; divided loyalties and confusion related to decentralization reforms related to provincial and national governments; and interference by politicians who were perceived as being unformed or uneducated (Sundeen, 1982). Reforms that have been initiated have not been effective and the 'administrative malaise has compounded over the years' that have adverse effect on the performance and productivity of the public service (Payani, 2000: 136). Resistance to the reforms and lack of political support for the reforms were the main reasons for the failures (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). The old problems continue to plague PNG's public administration, and over the years these problems have compounded. This section briefly examines some of the major problems affecting PNG's public administration followed by discussions on the challenges related to the culture of big man in PNG.

Criticisms towards the public service is mostly targeted at the poor delivery of services. The public administration has been labelled inefficient, incompetent and unresponsive (Payani, 2000). Initiatives such as the development of minimum service standards and the monitoring of performance by the National Monitoring Authority have not been effective, and in rural areas the systems are complicated and confusing for stakeholders (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). There are major discrepancies in services between the urban and rural areas. For instance, the existence of ombudsman system, free trade unions, independent judiciary and guarantee of basic civil and political liberties and a vibrant civil society, are mostly based in

and around cities (Hauck, 2010). In the rural areas, even if there is presence of civil society and other institutions, such as the churches and other non-governmental organizations, the government and these civil society institutions often view each other as ‘opponents rather than collaborators’ (McLeod, 2008: 12). To rectify service delivery problems, a series of decentralization policies were seen as necessary and implemented by the PNG government (Anere, 2012; Edmiston, 2002). However, there were also problems related to the implementation of the decentralization policies. The three layers of government are disaggregated and unfocused leading to conflicting priorities at the national and local levels, and with the provincial governments unable to meet expectation of the people and the local governments are not empowered (Pieper, 2004). The ability for provinces to spend freely results in pork-barrel politics where the priority of the provincial politicians tends to be focused on their own provinces rather than on national needs and priorities (Hardman 1986).

Another problem associated with the decentralization policies is the increasing politicization of the public servants. Fukuyama (2007) points out that the 1995 Organic Law whose purpose was to decentralize power actually led to the increase of power of national member of parliaments at the expense of provincial governments. Similarly, the law to pass move authority from provinces to districts increases the influence of national politicians whose influence is much greater at the district than provincial level. Additionally, there was a sense that the bureaucracy was ‘too powerful and independent, and not astute to political needs’ (Pieper, 2004: 3). Politically appointed advisers began to replace senior public servants resulting in substitution of technically sound advise with political and divisive policies. The restructuring of the Public Service Commission also increased politicization of the public service (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). Appointments to senior departmental positions and boards of public authorities started to be made on personal connections. While the justification was to strengthen the role of departmental heads, their professionalism was undermined as they were subject to change whenever a new minister was appointed (Pieper, 2004). Political appointments have also resulted in a disregard for performance, decline in accountability, lack of transparency, focus on short-term political goals, poor service delivery and corruption (Payani, 2000; Pieper, 2004; Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). Candidates for selection into the senior levels of public administration are influenced by ethnic, regional and political factors, and these posts are often perceived by politicians as representatives of regional, provincial or tribal interests rather than national interests (Payani, 2000). Such forms of appointments are not only restricted to senior public service officials but also at the lower levels, where entrance into public service was made easier by ethnical alliance and other networks (UN, 2004).

The effects of such cultural and political fragmentation of PNG are, according to Walton (2013), why state officials transgress rules and regulations. The deeply entrenched political influence over the public service is one of the main reason for PNG’s increasing level of corruption. Transparency International Report of 2015 highlights that the most corrupt institutions were police, education, judiciary, traffic inspectors and health. Bribery and impunity were listed as the most common type of corruption. Perhaps, this is not a surprise as there appears to be certain forgiveness towards corruption (Walton, 2013), and also because of the culture of gift-exchange where gifts are never free but reciprocal exchanges (Abraham and Miller, 2011). The other main cultural components that pervades the public administration and also results in much of the problems associated with the public administration in PNG is attributed to the culture of *wantok*. Voters vote for politicians based on *wantok* loyalties (Fukuyama, 2007). This pervades into the public administration where members of the same family, clan or region are provided favours, employed and promoted

(McLeod, 2008; Prideaux, 2006; Sundeen, 1982). Such patronage networks have shaped the democratic process in PNG and have also resulted in the widespread of corruption throughout PNG (Walton, 2013). A major consequence of the patronage networks is that the people in positions of power and influence are seen by their *wantoks* as “big men” (Payani, 2000). For these big men to maintain their status they abuse the discretionary powers vested in them to reward their *wantoks*, and that demands from the *wantoks* could embarrass a big man in the government or public service (Payani, 2000). To a certain extent, the decentralization policy of the 1990s has caused the problem, with politicians handed large sums of sectoral development funds each year, which have been used to gain electoral support, and resulting in the politician becoming a ‘super big man’ (Stewart and Strathern, 1995: 134). In recent years, this problem has been exacerbated by the provision of even more generous state development funds for politicians, and which have become important part of the economic landscape and key sources of patronage in PNG (Hauck, 2010).

Much remains desired to rectify some of the main challenges to its public administration system. Reforms that aim to build capacity of the public service and addressing inherent problems within the system that affect the delivery of services to the people are necessary. Incentives, extrinsic and intrinsic, are required to motivate public servants to retain and perform. These are incremental and ongoing reforms that the PNG’s public administration will need to adopt on a continuous basis depending on the global trends and local situations. At a macro level, engaging in major systemic or institutional reforms are going to be difficult but also unnecessary. Fukuyama (2007) contends that because PNG is based on a Westminster system it should provide for an adequate institutional basis for strong government. It is also unlikely that other forms of democratic institutions or an authoritarian alternative would lead to stronger and effective government. Therefore, governance reforms at a macro-political institutional level is unlikely to yield significant results (Fukuyama, 2007). Similarly, Rew (1986: 398) also argued that main problem of PNG’s institutionalization of public policy was not that it is ‘regressive, elite or class domination and inequitable’, but the lack of knowledge and resources available to the people. Thus, before engaging in any major reforms in the public administration, PNG’s government needs to take a step back and reassess its situation. It needs to identify key components that will make the most impact. One such component is the prevalent culture of big man in PNG and how to best integrate the positive aspects of that culture while minimizing or removing the negative characteristics.

Patronage System and Hybridity in PNG’s Public Administration

One of the major changes that has been suggested is related to the politicization of the public service. Towards this end, there has been some who have advocated that the Public Service Commission must be strengthened, and in fact, stated that it needs to ‘go back to the old PSC model’ (Pieper, 2004: 8). Such a reform would involve the merger of the Department of Personnel Management into the PSC and function as an independent constitutional office responsible for all personnel matters, protecting it from political interference. At the heart of this reform is the politics – administration relationship, and the desire for PNG’s public administration to be free of politicization in the public service. In general, this politics – administration relationship is blurry and problematic. Even if such a reform was proposed in PNG, getting the acceptance of the politicians to adopt it would be impossible. This would mean that they have to give up substantial power and authority, which is not likely to happen. A more plausible step to re-assess and is to revive the positive characteristics of the big man system, and then find a space for these positive aspects within the public administration system. Such a measure will address some of the inherent politics – administration problem

and also other related problems in PNG's public administration such as the decentralization problem, corruption, leadership and delivery of services. Even if these claims are ambitious at best, just the acknowledging and understanding the dynamics and role that the culture of big man within the existing public administration system will be helpful.

Many scholars have admitted that social and cultural traditions in PNG are deeply rooted and inter-twined with the political institutions. The reasons for the state weakness in PNG, Fukuyama (2007) points out, are not rooted in the political system but in the way the political systems interact with the underlying social and cultural traditions. PNG's societies are communal-based where regional and tribal loyalties are important. For those holding influential public office, positions are seen as representatives of their provinces and regions and helping friends, relatives or tribesmen is a social obligation that must be filled (Payani, 2000). Even the culture of gift-exchange, which economists would expect to die out and be replaced by modern economic practices, is still practiced (Abraham and Miller, 2011). These beliefs about exchange in traditional contexts are still applicable with the introduction of new ideas and patterns of work associated with the economy, and the inability or failure to maintain exchange relations often lead to social stress and strife within and between kinship groups (Curry, 2003). Trying to impose ideas using Western frameworks within a highly locally contextualized situation will fail to meet certain universal governance criteria, as these are criteria are not derived from within (McLeod, 2008). In the case of PNG, the culture of big man provides the deeply rooted local context upon which other reforms can be situated.

The culture of big man in recent years has been viewed negatively, especially as a cause for corruption and clientelism politics. If the argument that any new reforms will not work on account of the traditional culture of big man, which can neither be changed nor ignored; it will then be insightful to argue that the culture of big man actually has numerous positive aspects that can positively affect any reforms being initiated. Consequently, no new reforms or thinking is required, but just a proper examination of the positive and relevant aspects of big man needs to be highlighted. In some respects, a similar situation was faced by public administration of East Asian countries in the 1980s where the Confucius culture permeated its administration systems (Tsui, 2001). In this instance, these countries were able to sieve the positive aspects of the Confucius culture and inject the relevant characteristics into the system, and combine them with the universal ideas public administration to forge a system that worked for them. Similarly, positive aspects of the traditional culture of big man must be identified and integrated into PNG's public administration. Fukuyama (2007) posits that PNG is one of the most inherently democratic societies in the world, where village and local communities generate consensus through discussion and deliberation. The egalitarian nature of PNG societies requires an emphasis in the views of big men as coordinators rather than commanders in achieving influence in return for helping other achieve various social, political and religious ends (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997). Leadership, in the form of big men, is achieved rather than ascribed, and has to be demonstrated over time. Principles of meritocracy are inherent in the way people become big men. These principles operate within an informal setting, and needs to be integrated into the formal setting. Presently, indigenous leadership is not formally recognized by the state in PNG. The absence of formal recognition does not mean that indigenous leaders and notions of leadership do not permeate state institutions; and leaders continue to employ big man tactics while holding formal office (McLeod, 2008). It is important to recognize indigenous leadership and its combination with local notions of political organization and leadership with imported governance structures and values.

Some of the negative aspects of big man needs to be either downplayed or minimized. An example is in the allocation of funds, such as the District Support Grants and the District Support Improvement Program, by politicians based on *wantok* loyalties. Abolishing such policies by politicians and handing it over to the bureaucracy is not a feasible option as it is unlikely to get the political support (Fukuyama, 2007). Instead, politicians should be convinced to distribute the funds more fairly, thereby getting credit from a wider circle of constituents. It will also be important to impress upon them, as modern day big men, that the support for their future depends on their generosity. So that they can continue to exercise considerable foresight, fairness and integrity in their dealings with their followers (Keatan, 2013). Measures must also be adopted to minimize the ongoing negative sanction that people face when they fail their *wantoks* over the strengthening of internal accountability systems and mechanisms of public scrutiny (McLeod, 2008). The voting public who perpetuate big man politics must not be encouraged to only support those who promise immediate material gains and re-electing only those who deliver on such promises. Alongside such messages, anticorruption policies that call for have stricter enforcement of existing laws, particularly for politicians and public servants, with a message to citizens that corruption will not be tolerated must be in place (Walton, 2013). These measures that combine universal governance frameworks with local traditions will help in integrating and making relevant cultural aspects into the modern public administration system.

So what does all of this mean for the public administration system in PNG? For sure, PNG's public administration system is certainly a hybrid. It contains a mix of all the models and paradigms of public administration. The characteristics of the current public administration system of PNG that were described earlier were more ideal types than reality. There is space for integration of aspects of the patronage system, reflected through the culture of big man, into the existing public administration system of PNG. This integration reveals that at various levels of PNG's public administration system there are aspects of different characteristics of each paradigm and model. In the main characterization, PNG's public administration aspires to inculcate market-based competitive characteristics, and at the same time it operates strongly within a spoils system (part of the patronage system of Table 1). This is evident in the manner big men, particularly politicians, in PNG play a prominent role in allocation of government funds and in the appointment of public officials. Similarly, the dominant focus of PNG's public administration is on relationships (part of the emerging models of Table 1). Again, this is evident based on the *wantok* system where public officials are required to cater to the needs of their communities and tribes. Another component of hybridity in PNG's public administration is in performance objectives. In PNG, performance objectives of the public administration are to satisfy the needs of rulers or big men (part of the patronage system). A big man must also be able to earn his position by fulfilling the needs of the people, comparatively more than the rulers and chiefs. So it is also important for him to be responsive to the needs of the people. Thus the public administration system must also be responsiveness (part of the emerging models of Table 1). It is important to acknowledge hybridity in PNG's public administration as it provides an understanding of some of the underlying dynamics and tensions, and also provides a basis for future reforms.

Conclusion

As countries search for new paradigms and models for their public administration system, the pace of these changes have been dramatic for some countries. Particularly in developing countries, even before it can get used to the traditional public administration system, newer models are being thrust upon them. The experience of PNG's public administration shows

that as its public administration was incorporating aspects of TPA since it gained independence, the World Bank and other international institutions in the 1980s and 1990s were already advocating for NPM-related reforms to be initiated. With NPM being perceived as a paradigm that does not work, in general, and more specifically for developing countries, public administration systems such as PNG's are confused. For countries, such as PNG that have strong traditions and culture, it needs to look to its history and re-assess its institutional context. In PNG, the culture of big man is still relevant and continues to play a prominent role in defining the characteristics of contemporary leadership. These indigenous social structures must not be ignored, as Lederman (2000: 1164) warns, there has been a 'progressive decline in research on big man since the mid-1980s'. One reason for this is because most descriptions of big man in PNG are presented in a negative manner linking it to corruption and politicization of the public service. However, there are traditional characteristics of big man that is based on merit and equality. These are the characteristics that need to be applied to the modern context.

PNG does not need to, and cannot, undertake major institutional change. Incremental reforms are probably the best way forward. Reforms in building capacity of the public service and improving delivery of services to the public are reforms that is required on a continuous basis. There is also the need to implement the policies that have been put in place to strengthen transparency, accountability and efficiency in the system. These are important for any public administrations across the world. For PNG to take any step forward, it needs to have a proper understanding of its current system. It needs to understand the underlying nature of its public administration system within the context of its culture and traditions, and to acknowledge that it is a hybrid system. For developing countries with similar contexts where there are strong cultural and traditions that are still playing into their political and economic institutions, any public sector reforms that are initiated are likely to face major caveats.

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Table 1: Ideal Types of Public Administration

	Patronage	Traditional Public Administration	New Public Management	Emerging Models
Characterisation	Spoils System	Bureaucratic	Post-Bureaucratic, Competitive Government	Post-Competitive, Collaborative Governance
Citizen-State Relationship	Servant-Master	Obedience	Entitlement	Empowerment
Accountability of Senior Officials	Ruler/ Sovereign	Politicians	Customers	Citizens and stakeholders
Dominant Focus/ Guiding Principles	Loyalty	Rules	Results	Relationships
Key Attributes	Personal relationships	Impartiality	Professionalism	Responsiveness
Preferred System of Delivery	Duress/ Forcibly	Hierarchical departments or self-regulating profession	Private sector or tightly defined arms-length public agency	Menu of alternatives selected pragmatically
Performance Objectives	Satisfying the needs of the ruler/sovereign	Managing inputs	Managing inputs and outputs	Multiple objectives including service, outputs, satisfaction, outcomes
Role of Public Participation	Provide services	Limited to voting in elections	Limited—apart from customer satisfaction surveys	Crucial—multifaceted (customer, citizen, key stakeholder)

Source: See Ugyel (2014)